

How to Build Your College Graduate Personal Brand: Your Work Isn’t Over Even *After* an Interview

If you walk out of an interview, breathe a sigh of relief, and think, “That’s it — I’ve done all I can, and it’s out of my hands now,” think again! I interviewed more than 50 of the country’s top college recruiters, who shared dozens of tips you can do *after* your interview to give yourself an edge when trying to land a great job. Here are just a handful:

Summarize Immediately. As soon as an interview is finished, find a quiet place to sit down, and write your summary of the meeting. You’ll probably forget some important points even if you wait just an hour or two after the interview. And, after several meetings with a number of companies, interviews will all start to blend together in your mind unless you take good notes right away.

What were the key topics you and the interviewer discussed? What were the names of the key decision-makers who were mentioned? What did you notice about the company environment? Did people look happy or harassed? Did you get a “good feeling” while you were there? Writing down notes after the interview will help you refer to important points in follow-up e-mails and also help you remember key points when it comes time for a second interview.

Follow Up. Don’t take it personally if you don’t hear back quickly from an interviewer. HR reps are often so busy that, even though the hiring process is important, they’re sometimes forced to put it on the back burner. In fact, some companies have fairly complex processes to follow before anyone can be hired, including asking other employees for input. So, don’t sweat it if you don’t hear back right away.

Don’t Let a Rejection Get You Down. If you do get a “no” response after an interview, that’s okay. In fact, look at it as a way to save you time and money. Now, you can focus on companies where you have more potential. Nora Bammann of The Kroger Company says, “Rejections are tough but (a) you got interview practice, and (b) you can use the experience to further refine your job search criteria.”

When a “no” happens, take the time to evaluate what you would have liked the most and the least about the job you didn’t get. You can then use that information to help you choose the best companies and jobs for you. It can also help you to come up with better questions to ask in future interviews. Retired professional basketball player Michael Jordan said: “I’ve missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot ... and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

A “No” Can Still Be a Connection. Don’t get rid of any information you have about an interviewer! When I was looking for my very first job right out of college, I interviewed with a company that was offering a position that I really wanted. After a couple of (what I thought were good) interviews, I was told the crushing news: I didn’t get the job. I felt defeated, but I resigned

myself to the bad news and wrote a thank you note anyway to the person who would have been my boss. In that note, I said that I liked the company and asked him to please consider me for any future openings. One month later, the person who had just been hired for that original job was fired. A phone call and one more interview later, and I was working!

You never know what can happen from the connections you make during an interview. You may be called in for a different job with that same company at a later date, or the interviewer may get a new position elsewhere and remember you. Hold on to recruiters' information!

Don't Relax Too Much in a Second Interview. If you get called back for a second or third interview, it's easy to get lulled into believing you're just a signature away from “You're hired!” But that's a dangerous attitude. Most HR experts agree that it's actually in follow-up interviews that a large number of college grads fall out of the hiring pool. Remember: Be watchful about communicating your personal brand in *every* interview, not just the first or second one. This means continuing to wear interview clothes, even if everyone else at the company dresses in business casual. Once you have the formal hiring letter and you've signed it and sent it in, consider yourself hired; until then, keep a steady course and never stop communicating your brand.

The Subsequent E-mail Trap. Don't suddenly get casual with your e-mails to the interviewer or anyone else at the company. As one recruiter cautions, “Don't start forwarding jokes or funny e-mails to the interviewer or disclosing information about your personal life even if you begin to feel more comfortable with that person. It's critical to keep a professional relationship with the interviewer no matter how friendly you may have become.”

It's important to stay consistent in how you communicate your personal brand even after an interview is over. Doing so will keep your individual brand alive long after the interview is over and ultimately help you land a job you'll love - right out of college.

Brenda S. Bence is an internationally-recognized branding expert, Certified Executive Coach, dynamic trainer and Certified Speaking Professional, and the author of several books. Her award-winning *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo* personal branding book series includes *How YOU™ Are Like Shampoo for College Graduates: The Complete Personal Branding System to Define, Position, and Market Yourself and Land a Job You Love*. Filled with dozens of job search and interview tips from the country's top college recruiters and university placement professionals, the book contains the only personal branding system focused on helping college grads craft and communicate a personal brand to sail through interviews and land a job they love – right after college.



With an MBA from Harvard Business School, Brenda's career has spanned more than two decades and has included developing mega brands for Procter & Gamble and Bristol-Myers Squibb across four continents and 50 countries. Now, as President of Brand Development Associates (BDA) International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development.

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